

1. A process for forming copper metal interconnects and copper-filled vias in a dielectric layer on an integrated circuit structure wherein the impurity level of the copper-filled metal lines and copper-filled vias is lowered, the process comprising:

- 5        a) depositing a layer of copper metal in trenches and via openings previously formed in one or more dielectric layers;
- b) then annealing the deposited copper layer;
- c) then optionally removing a thin portion of the top surface of the deposited copper layer;
- 10      d) then repeating at least the deposit step and the step of annealing the deposited layer of copper one or more additional times; and
- e) then planarizing the annealed structure.

2. The process of claim 1 including the further step of annealing the planarized structure.

3. The process of claim 2 wherein said copper layer is annealed at a temperature within a range of from about 150°C to about 400°C.

4. The process of claim 3 wherein said copper layer is annealed in a furnace for a period of from about 0.5 minutes to about 30 minutes.

5. The process of claim 3 wherein said copper layer is annealed using rapid thermal annealing.

6. A process for forming copper metal interconnects and copper-filled vias in a dielectric layer on an integrated circuit structure wherein the impurity level of the copper-filled metal lines and copper-filled vias is lowered, the process comprising:

- a) depositing a layer of copper metal in trenches and via openings previously formed in one or more dielectric layers;
- b) then annealing the deposited copper layer;
- c) then removing a thin portion of the surface of said deposited copper layer;
- d) then repeating the depositing step, the annealing step, and the removing step one additional time; and
- e) then planarizing the annealed structure;

whereby the average grain size of the copper is increased, the resistivity is reduced, and stresses are more homogeneously distributed in the copper.

7. The process of claim 6 including the further step of annealing the planarized structure.

8. The process of claim 7 wherein said copper layer is annealed at a temperature within a range of from about 150°C to about 400°C.

9. The process of claim 8 wherein said copper layer is annealed in a furnace for a period of from about 0.5 minutes to about 30 minutes.

10. The process of claim 8 wherein said copper layer is annealed using rapid thermal annealing.

11. A process for forming copper metal interconnects and copper-filled vias in a dielectric layer on an integrated circuit structure wherein the impurity level of the copper-filled metal lines and copper-filled vias is lowered, the process comprising:

- 5      a) depositing a layer of copper metal in trenches and via openings previously formed in one or more dielectric layers;
- b) then annealing the deposited copper layer;
- c) then, removing a thin portion of copper from the surface of said deposited copper layer;
- 10     d) then repeating steps a, b, and c one or more additional times to complete the filling of the trenches and vias with copper; and
- e) then planarizing the structure.

12. The process of claim 11 including the further step of annealing the planarized structure.

13. The process of claim 11 including the further steps of:

- a) depositing a further layer of copper metal over said filled trenches and via openings previously formed in said one or more dielectric layers; and
- b) then annealing said further layer of copper.

14. The process of claim 13 wherein said further layer of copper is annealed at a temperature within a range of from about 150°C to about 400°C.

15. The process of claim 14 wherein said further layer of copper is annealed in a furnace for a period of from about 0.5 minutes to about 5 minutes.

16. The process of claim 14 wherein said further layer of deposited copper is annealed using rapid thermal annealing.